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Winthrop Poll: Walker and Bush Early Leaders Among SC GOP Likely Voters

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Winthrop Poll: Walker and Bush Early Leaders Among SC GOP Likely Voters

Quick Facts

- The Winthrop Poll surveyed 956 residents in South Carolina by landline and cell phones between April 4-12. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.2% at the 95% confidence level.
- The Winthrop Poll questioned what type of candidate the likely GOP voter thought had the best chance of winning the general election and becoming president. Sixty percent said a moderate candidate had a better shot, but 36.8% thought a strong conservative candidate was a contender.



Scott Huffman

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – In the early horse race for the **2016 S.C. Republican Presidential primary**, **Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker** and **former Florida Governor Jeb Bush** lead the pack with 13.6% and 12.7% of the voters, respectively, if the election was held today, according to the latest Winthrop Poll.

The remaining dozen candidates garnered single digit support or less in the poll of likely GOP voters. ([See Table T10 in the questions and responses](#)) However, former **Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee** and Bush show the most potential support in a series of questions that asked respondents whether they would consider voting for each candidate.

Other politicians close behind if the election were held today are the U.S. senators - **Ted Cruz of Texas**, **Lindsey Graham of South Carolina** and **Rand Paul of Kentucky**. Bush appears to have converted more of his potential support into active support, said **Poll Director Scott Huffman**.

Poll participants who identify as **Evangelicals** could be a strong source of potential support for **Huckabee**, but more than six in 10 Evangelicals cannot see themselves supporting Graham and more than three-quarters of Evangelicals cannot see themselves supporting **N.Y. tycoon Donald Trump**. Those who approve of the Tea Party can see themselves supporting Cruz more than any other candidate at this stage.

The **Winthrop Poll** surveyed 956 residents in South Carolina by landline and cell phones between April 4-12. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.2% at the 95% confidence level, according to Huffman.

The **Winthrop Poll** questioned what type of candidate the likely GOP voter thought had the best chance of winning the general election and becoming president. Sixty percent said a moderate candidate had a better shot, but 36.8% thought a strong conservative candidate was a contender.

On the other hand, seven in 10 respondents said when selecting a Republican nominee for president, they thought it was more important for a candidate's beliefs and values to match to their own than to vote for someone likely to win the election.

HEALTH, BUSINESS and RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Winthrop Poll callers asked likely GOP voters about what kinds of services should be provided by health insurance providers. They responded:

- Well visits should be covered to the physician - 78.1% said yes.

- Birth control pills for women - 55.5% said yes, 40.6% said no.
- Intra-uterine devices for birth control - 50.9% said yes, 39.5% said no.
- Vasectomies for men - half said yes, 43.2% said no.

With a strong outcry in Indiana about a new law that would allow businesses to turn away gay and lesbian customers in the name of "religious freedom," S.C. GOP likely voters are divided in their response. Half said business owners should NOT be allowed to refuse service, while 44.4% said they should be allowed.

Speaking of religion, 44.4% of respondents believe evangelical Christians have too little influence in the Republican Party today. A third thought it was the right amount.

PERSONAL VALUES and MORALS

Poll respondents were asked about their own values and morals. Concerning whether it is acceptable to have a **child without being married**, 37.3% said it was strongly unacceptable, while 36% said it was either strongly or somewhat acceptable.

Seven in 10 respondents said it was strongly or somewhat acceptable for a **marriage between blacks and whites**. Only 16.1% said it was strongly unacceptable.

Eighty percent of those polled said **religion** was very important to their life. Protestants made up 79.7% of the respondents, with 75.1% of Protestants (59.8% of the entire sample) also describing themselves as "born again" or evangelical Christian.

POLITICAL LEADERS

President Barack Obama's disapproval rating in South Carolina among likely GOP voters has plummeted to 91.3%.

Meanwhile, **Congress' disapproval rating** also remains in the basement at 80.2%, a figure that is lower than the national opinion of Congress.

GOP likely voters are happy with their elected state leaders and their popularity appears to be on the rise in South Carolina. **Here are the approval ratings of S.C. leaders among S.C. GOP Presidential Primary Likely Voters:**

- Governor Nikki Haley – 79% approve
- S.C. State Legislature - 61% approve, while 26.7% disapprove and 12.4% don't know or refuse to answer
- U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C. – 83% approve. Half of the respondents thought Scott shared a lot of their values and interests.
- U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. – 58.2% approve, while 34.6% disapprove. Only half of the respondents thought he shared some of the values and interests with people like them.

Tea Party membership is claimed by 13.9% of those surveyed. Its popularity appears to be on the rise in South Carolina as nearly half approve of the movement. Nearly 30% are either unsure or don't feel that they have enough information to form an opinion.

POLL FUNDING, METHODOLOGY AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The Winthrop Poll is paid for by Winthrop University with additional support from [The West Forum on Politics and Policy](#) at Winthrop University. Its [Social & Behavioral Research Laboratory](#) which conducts the Winthrop Poll is a charter member of the Transparency Initiative through the American Association for Public Opinion Research.

[View more information about the poll methodology.](#)

For additional information, or to set up an interview with **Poll Director Scott Huffmon**, please contact **Judy Longshaw** at longshawj@winthrop.edu or 803/323-2404 (office) or 803/984-0586 (cell).

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